

SPRING 2025

LEGACY

TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

Sheryl R. Abshire Ph.D.



ADVOCACY

**The Critical
Imperative:
Advocacy for
Public Education
in a Time of Crisis**



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The Critical Imperative: Advocacy for Public Education in a Time of Crisis

Sheryl R. Abshire, Ph.D., Thought Leader and Former Chief Technology Officer,
Calcasieu Parish Public Schools, Lake Charles, Louisiana

It's time to pay attention!

Public education in America is not just at a critical juncture; it's in a state of emergency. Our schools are under siege, struggling with inadequate funding, political attacks, staffing shortages, and a growing chasm between students' needs and the resources available to meet them. **NOW** is the time for education leaders, policymakers, parents, and community members to raise their voices in strong advocacy for public education! Failure to act risks dismantling one of the bedrock institutions of our democracy.

Public education has been treated as an afterthought in policy discussions for far too long. Yet, it is the foundation upon which our nation's economic prosperity, civic engagement, and social mobility are built. More importantly, public education is the economic engine that drives our country now and into the future. Today, as challenges mount, our collective advocacy is not just crucial; it's our strength. Advocacy is not just a buzzword; it is a moral imperative. We are responsible for speaking out, taking action, and fighting for the resources, policies, and support systems to ensure every child, regardless of zip code, has access to a high-quality education.

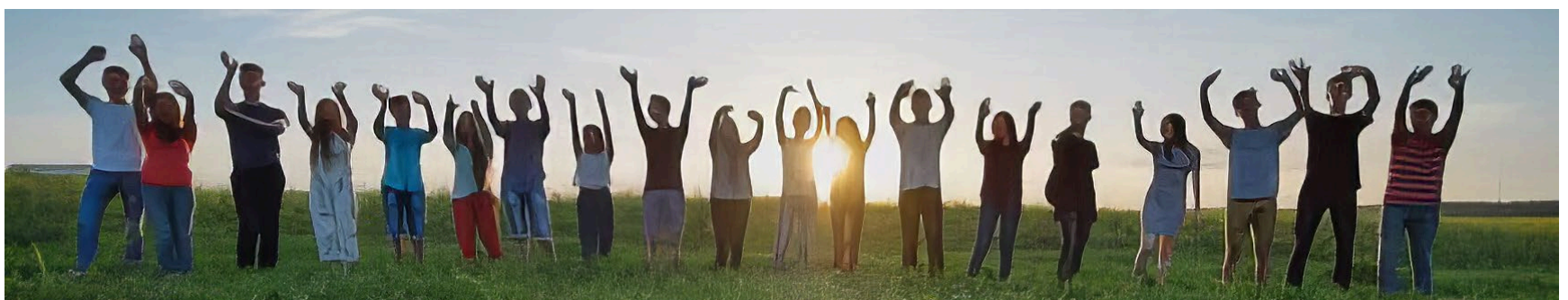
The Assault on Public Education

Today, public education faces an unprecedented onslaught of challenges. Funding is at crisis levels, especially in communities that heavily rely on federal, state, and local revenues. Teacher shortages have reached epidemic proportions, driven by stagnant wages, overwhelming workloads, and a lack of respect for the profession. Politicized attacks on curriculum, book bans, and restrictions on what can be taught in classrooms threaten to undermine the very purpose of education: to empower students with knowledge and critical thinking skills.

The rise of voucher programs and the expansion of charter schools framed as "school choice" have drained resources from traditional public schools, exacerbating inequities. The students who remain in public schools, often those with the greatest needs, are left with fewer resources, less support, and an educational system that is being set up to fail.

Technology gaps, exacerbated by the pandemic, continue to limit access to digital learning for millions of students, further deepening the divide between those who have and those who have not. Meanwhile, school safety concerns, mental health crises, and declining student engagement post-pandemic have left teachers and administrators grappling with complex challenges without adequate support.

If these challenges remain unaddressed, we are not just failing our students, we are failing our future. The consequences of inaction are dire, with a generation of students at risk of being left behind and our nation's future prosperity and stability in jeopardy.





*“Advocacy is **THE** force that drives change. It is the engine that compels lawmakers to allocate resources, forces policymakers to reconsider harmful decisions, and ensures that public education remains a national priority. We must embrace advocacy in multiple dimensions at the local, state, and national levels to defend and strengthen public education.”*

1. Advocating for Increased Funding

Education funding is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Yet, in many states, public schools are underfunded to the tune of billions of dollars. We must advocate for sustained, equitable funding that provides every student with access to high-quality teachers, up-to-date instructional materials, modern technology, and safe school environments. This is not just a call to action; it's a demand for change.

Grassroots efforts, engagement with local school boards, and direct lobbying of state legislatures and Congress can influence budget decisions. Educators, parents, and community leaders must work together to demand that lawmakers prioritize education funding and reject efforts to divert public dollars into private institutions at the expense of public schools.

2. Defending the Teaching Profession

Teachers are the backbone of our education system, yet they are leaving the profession in record numbers. Advocacy efforts must ensure competitive salaries, reduce class sizes, provide mental health support for educators, and foster a culture of respect for the teaching profession.

We must also advocate for policies that eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and empower teachers to focus on what matters most—teaching. This includes fighting against the politicization of curriculum decisions and resisting efforts to censor educators who seek to provide students with a well-rounded, truthful education.

3. Fighting for Equity and Inclusion

Public education must serve all students, not just the privileged few. Advocacy must center on dismantling systemic inequities that disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and those from low-income families. This means pushing for policies that expand access to early childhood education, support culturally responsive teaching, and ensure school environments are welcoming and inclusive for all students.

School districts must also be held accountable for addressing disparities in discipline, graduation rates, and access to advanced coursework. We need advocates willing to challenge policies and practices that widen achievement gaps and limit opportunities for historically marginalized communities.

4. Protecting Public Schools from Privatization

The push toward privatization, through the expansion of vouchers and for-profit charter schools, threatens the very existence of public education. Advocacy efforts must focus on ensuring that public funds remain in public schools and that policymakers understand the long-term consequences of draining resources from traditional school districts.

We must also hold charter schools accountable for transparency, equitable enrollment practices, and fair treatment of students with disabilities. The unchecked expansion of charter networks and voucher programs should not come at the cost of weakening the public school system that serves most American students.

Turning Advocacy into Action

It is not enough to acknowledge these challenges. We must act now. Effective advocacy requires a multipronged approach that includes:

1. Engaging with policymakers

Attend school board meetings, contact elected officials, and participate in policy discussions that impact public education. For instance, you can write letters or emails to your local representatives, attend town hall meetings, or even schedule a meeting to discuss your concerns.

2. Building coalitions

Partner with parents, community leaders, businesses, and advocacy groups to amplify your message.

3. Leveraging media and storytelling

Use social media, op-eds, and community forums to share personal stories that illustrate the real impact of educational policies.

4. Encouraging voter participation

Education policy is shaped at the ballot box. Supporting candidates who prioritize public education and encouraging voter turnout are critical advocacy strategies.

5. Empowering students

Students are not just the recipients of education; they are powerful advocates for their rights. Encouraging student voices in policy discussions ensures that those most affected by decisions are part of the conversation, and it's a crucial part of our advocacy efforts.

A Call to Action

Undoubtedly, we are in a battle for the soul of public education. The forces seeking to dismantle our schools are well-funded and relentless. However, we have something even more powerful, the collective voices of those who believe in the promise of public education.

We cannot afford to be silent. We must fight for every child's right to a high-quality education, for the educators who dedicate their lives to teaching, and for the communities that rely on strong public schools to thrive. Our advocacy must be bold, relentless, and unwavering.

Public education is not just another issue on the policy agenda; it is the foundation of our democracy, the driver of economic opportunity, and the key to a better future for all. The time to act is now.

Will you join the fight?



Dr. Sheryl Abshire has an impressive body of work and an unwavering passion for education that has built a legacy of transformative impact on education. As an important voice in the profession, she serves as a panelist on our Worthy Town Halls and contributes resources to our EDInfluencers initiative. We are grateful for her continued commitment to education!



Legacy is the official journal of The Worthy Educator, elevating the good work being done by leaders in education who are working to change the narrative on the profession and actively plan for impact that transforms its future to serve the needs of a diverse, decentralized, global society that is inclusive, equitable and open to all people as next generations adapt, evolve and contribute by solving problems and creating solutions that meet the needs of a world we have yet to envision.

Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis from educators who are implementing new and innovative approaches in the classroom and at the building and district levels. Information on specifications and instructions to submit can be found online at theworthyeducator.com/journal